into his buggy and strike out into the night. The scented air of the country cured me immediately of my grippe and fatigue.

At his house a cold supper that his wife had prepared for me. The old deaf maid sits down in the dining-room near us, clasps her hands on her knees, and falls into contemplation. I feel her eyes weigh upon me.

5 December

Paul Claudel came to lunch. Too short a jacket, aniline-colored necktie; his face still more square than the day before yesterday; his speech both precise and full of images; his voice staccato, clipped, and authoritative.

His conversation, very rich and alive, does not improvise anything, you feel. He recites truths that he has patiently worked out. Yet he knows how to joke and, if he only let himself go a bit more on the spur of the moment, would not be without charm. I try to discover what is lacking in that voice . . . a little human warmth? . . . No, not even that; he has something much better. It is, I believe, the most *gripping* voice I have ever heard. No, he doesn't charm; he does not want to charm; he convinces —or impresses. I didn't even seek to protect myself from him, and when, after the meal, speaking of God, of Catholicism, of his faith, of his happiness, he added as I said that I understood him:

"But, Gide, then why don't you become converted? . . .[?>] (this without any brutality, without even a smile). I let it be apparent how his words had upset my mind.

I should attempt to set them down here if I were not to find them in his *Traite de la co-naissance au monde et de soi-m£me* [42] that he has just finished. Likewise I should write down the few details he gave about his life if I did not think that life were to become famous.

UOde aux Muses, he tells us, begun in 1900, hung for a long time interrupted. He didn't know "how to finish it." It was only in 1904 that he added the invocation to Erato and the end.

"For a long time, for two years, I went without

writing; I thought I must sacrifice art to religion. My art! God alone could know the value of this sacrifice. I was saved when I understood that art and religion must not be set in antagonism within us. That they must not be confused either. That they must remain, so to speak, perpendicular to each other;

[42] "Treatise of the Awakening to the World and to Oneself/' which forms part of the *Art poetique* of 1907. This tide, inspired by Bossuet's seventeenth-century *Traite de la connaissance de Dieu et de soi-m&me* and untranslatable in its subtlety, rests on Claudel's typical identification of the two words *naissance* and *connaissance: "Nous ne natesons pas seuls. Nattre, pour tout, c'est co-naitre. Toute naissance est une connaissance. . . /'* ("We are not born alone. To be torn, in brief, is to be born with something. Every birth **is** an acquisition of knowledge.")